Developing Assessment at City: A Review of Learning Development Associate Projects 2010-12

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Abstract

City University London has a strong tradition of encouraging pedagogic practitioner-research through the sponsorship of workplace and inter-departmental project working under the auspices of the Learning Development Centre (LDC). Reflecting sector-wide issues, the University's focus on assessment and feedback as a priority area for academic development has resulted in several studies which have shaped the university's understanding and practices in this area. In this article I review a selection of recent projects which have a bearing on this area of academic practice. The scope of projects is wide, focusing on many different facets of assessment and feedback, but with an emphasis on improving student experience of this in both classroom and workplace settings. This review starts with a discussion of some of the concerns surrounding assessment and feedback within the University, before exploring how recent studies by staff and Learning Development Associates have explored this agenda and set about changing practice.

Key words: Learning, Assessment, Student Experience, Feedback, Failure, Curriculum Design

Assessment in Context

Assessment and feedback are core functions of the higher education system and as such generate a range of sector-wide concerns and issues. These are linked firmly with issues of learning, quality and student experience. International trends such as the continued massification of higher education have led to perspectives of assessment as becoming mechanised, fuelled by increasing class sizes, reduced resources and the potential for dumbing down of academic standards (Gibbs 2013). The Higher Education Academy (2012) accepts that assessment practices in higher education have not kept pace with innovations and change occurring in other areas of teaching and learning. Issues such as constructive alignment and curriculum design for learning continue to challenge educators to strive for excellence, yet perceptions may lag behind. Students may be increasingly looked on as consumers of their learning, yet Behrens (2013) reports the trend in national student surveys for scores in the 'assessment and feedback' category to trail behind those for overall student experience satisfaction levels.

Like many other Universities in the sector, City University London employs a range of methods to explore and understand the student experience, ranging from national surveys (NSS and PTES) through to in-house surveys of student experience through years one and two. These metrics provide an interesting lens through which to quantify the student experience and benchmark against other organisations. Whilst recent feedback from the 'Your Voice' survey of first and second year undergraduates identifies individual courses that might benefit from a development focus, this survey attracts relatively few respondents which may skew the real picture of students' experiences of feedback. Lacklustre NSS scores across the university in relation to assessment can present a reputational risk as statistics resulting from this are often used by students in helping them to determine their

choice of University via the league tables that contribute to the external reputation of an organisation.

Simplistic arguments regarding improving student perceptions of what constitutes feedback tend to focus on the need to inform students *when* they are receiving feedback, as if to reinforce that they indeed are receiving it. We do need to understand what is happening for our students, going beyond the basic stance of lecturers' 'labelling' or qualifying interactions by '*telling* them its feedback'. If it is supposed that the quality of feedback is in the perception of the student, who are we to deny their experience, through the simplistic act of 'badging' activities thus? Within the University there is a growing recognition that students' perceptions and experiences of 'quality feedback' could help to improve academic practice, and student outcomes. Encouraging dialogue in assessment and feedback may provide one way of including the student in the assessment process and encouraging self-assessment, and offers hope for engaging the student in the learning process (Sutton 2009).

Learning Development Associate Projects

The Learning Development Centre at City University London promotes practitioner research through encouraging academic staff to develop a project in one of several key work strands relating to the core foci of the City University Strategy (2012). A range of awards are offered which provide either funding or day release from normal duties to undertake research of benefit to the wider university. Topic areas may also change, however the Assessment and Feedback strand has not changed, indicating its significance to the work of the university. Each award recipient is expected to present and publish their findings. As part of my own Learning Development Associate role I have undertaken a review of recent projects within this work strand.

Projects

Six projects are included in this review that, encompass a range of foci and approaches to data collection. Abbott et al (2012) and Wiley (2012) provide insights into the need for constructive alignment in terms of clarity and comprehensiveness of assessment methods. Wiley (2012) explores quality and clarity issues in feedback; whilst Abbott et al (2012) and Brown (2012) identify this as an issue in assessment or curricular design. Clarity is also raised as an issue by Attenborough et al (2011), whose implementation of audio feedback on module assessments through podcasting identifies this as a useful way of transmitting feedback. Meanwhile Brown (2012) gives a commentary on the implementation of an innovative curriculum redesign to improve assessment and feedback for students. Reimers and Freeman (2012) take a more psychological approach, exploring perceptions of the timing of feedback in relation to other universities and how these might be managed. Finally in a non-LDC affiliated (but university sponsored) study, I explored the experiences of students who had failed module assessments in a post-registration nursing module, in terms of their workplace and university based learning. Each of these studies will be interrogated for data which may contribute towards a wider university understanding of the experiences and perceptions of students in relation to their assessments and feedback.

Student Experiences of Feedback

Abbott et al (2012) explored several dimensions of students' experiences of feedback in an exploration of how students in the School of Health Sciences (SHS) would prefer to be assessed. In particular their remit was to understand what, about assessments was enjoyable or anxiety-provoking, and what was considered fair or rigorous in their assessments. The most significant outcome of this small interview study was considered to be the ability and willingness of the third year students interviewed to contribute to a constructive dialogue about assessment design. Wiley (2011) argues that in general students may not feel prepared to play a more active role in assessment design and that timeframes for school ratification to assessment changes might be prohibitive in the short term. However, Wiley (2011) also reports the suggestion of one of his focus group participants, that further student involvement in assessment design would give students' more ownership of the assessment and feedback process, supporting the claims of Abbott et al (2012). As is common in practitioner research, Abbott et al (2012) recruited a smaller sample group than anticipated, with only six students agreeing to be interviewed. Whilst the authors state that this is a limitation of their study and that findings cannot be taken as representative, some 'unique and universal understandings' (Simons 1996: 225) of the student experience are evident. These include a belief amongst students that a mixture of assessment methods is the fairest way to assess a programme, to account for the diverse preferences and abilities of students. Some recognition that assessments could be enjoyable (coursework, viva and essays) was tempered by an agreement that exams, presentations and objective structured clinical examinations were sources of stress to students. However issues of fairness in terms of being assessed on concepts not considered by them as being part of the curriculum they studied; unequal workloads; consistent applications of assessment criteria and access to lecturers' time were also raised. Additionally, interviewees identified power inequalities between student and supervisor which appeared to override criterion based assessment. Much time and effort was spent pandering to the wishes and instructions of their workplace supervisors in order to get through (pass) an assessment. Meanwhile seemingly conflicting feedback between academic tutors and clinical practice supervisors was provided in some cases.

Recommendations from this report include an acknowledgement of the hitherto unexplored role that students can play in the design and review of student assignments, and suggest that mechanisms to facilitate engagement are considered. Three recommendations around actual assignment design are offered which have some resonance with the literature surrounding constructive alignment of learning (Biggs 2003). Firstly, the advance provision of clear and comprehensive information about assessment tasks and marking criteria is considered good practice. Wiley (2012) found that oral and verbal feedback needed to be clear and concise, whilst both Abbott et al (2012) and Wiley (2012) identified that this needed to be mirrored by clear and simplified assessment and marking criteria. These studies, although both small scale sit well together as companion pieces, with both offering a view on different dimensions of the assessment process, and indicate some synergies between students across the University. Early introduction to, and clarity of assessment materials was considered by the students interviewed as essential to facilitate their preparation for assessments.

Secondly, checks on ensuring that course content is adequate preparation for assessment were recommended as interviewees felt that assessments sometimes contained materials not covered in class. Finally, consistent adherence by markers to the marking criteria was felt to be an issue with some markers and workplace supervisors being seen as 'easier' than others in their assessment practices (Abbott et al 2012). This study did not explicitly consider the timing of feedback although one instance of an appreciative student recognising that there was now a four week turnaround of marks and feedback is provided within the report.

Timing of Feedback

Timing of feedback on assessments is the focus of Reimers and Freeman's (2012) project. They explored satisfaction with the timing of student feedback after assignment submission and perceptions of this in relation to other universities. In a survey of 204 social science students their results showed that the median expectation for return of feedback was 19 days. Significantly this is below the 21 day turnaround time expected by the university. There was no significant difference in estimation of feedback turnaround time between those who were satisfied, and those dissatisfied with the speed at which they received feedback. These two groups were fairly well matched in terms of numbers, although a breakdown of these is not provided in the advance report. Those who were dissatisfied with the promptness of feedback, tended to have perceptions that other institutions had quicker marking and moderation processes, although NUS/HSBC findings (2008) show that this is not necessarily the case.

In what he describes as a 'modest' study within the University, Wiley (2012) explores student understanding and engagement with feedback on assessments and formative work. Collecting data from a range of sources, and culminating with student focus groups, Wiley shows that students recognise that feedback contains both qualitative and quantitative components. The majority agreed that both component types were essential to them understanding their own performance, although some acknowledged that the grade was a more important part of their feedback. Further, some students never collect marked work, viewing only their mark on the University's Strategic Learning Environment (Moodle). Within programme handbooks there was some confusion about who, and what, feedback was for. Wiley (2012) suggests that handbooks offer two competing notions of feedback. Firstly feedback on assessed work to the student, and secondly feedback from the student on their programme experience. For example, feedback within the student programme handbook was predominantly discussed as students giving feedback to inform University programming and provision (through student committees such as Student Staff Liaison Committee).

In terms of timeliness, Wiley highlights a three to four week turnaround time for marking and returning feedback to students which was instigated by the University in 2011. Some students were unaware of these parameters, with an example of a student who thought that they received feedback after five weeks described in the report. This has some similarity with the students described by Reimers and Freeman (2012) who overestimated, and were dissatisfied with, the actual turnaround time for feedback. Wiley (2012) gives one example of this labelled as 'some students...'rather than quantifying this which, could allow readers to gauge the strength of response. Further research with a similar student group might allow this to be explored further. Students participating in Wiley's study appear to demur from the perceived wisdom that 'quick and dirty' feedback (Gibbs and Simpson 2004) is more useful for students than perfect feedback given weeks later. Instead there was a recognition that

good quality feedback was more important to their learning than 'imperfect' feedback that a quick and dirty process would allow. A lack of consistency between feedback on formative drafts and summative assignments was also noted although students appeared to be well aware of where to solicit further clarification and study skills support.

Clarity and Format of Feedback

Previous studies examining the clarity of feedback to students have focused on claims that feedback provided can be cryptic, vague, negatively worded and lacking appropriate developmental advice (Weaver 2006, Carless 2007). Also, students do not always interpret it in the way it was intended by the marker (Orsmond and Merry 2011). Wiley's (2012) participants discussed a lack of clarity in explaining how the student might address issues raised in their feedback. An example was given where a student had been asked to add more content to an assignment with a tight word limit, but was given no advice on how to accommodate this within his available word count. Similar observations were made by Duncan (2007) who commented that some areas of feedback were not easy for assessors to make clear. He identified sixteen issues, synthesised from tutor feedback in over 150 tutor feedback sheets to students undertaking a second year module (level 2) at his university. Duncan notes that of the list provided in table one below, the first twelve items were fairly easy to address in feedback in terms of providing instructional feedback. However items 13-16 proved a challenge for tutors who found analysis (rather than description) a hard skill to teach, unless their students spontaneously 'got it'. Even when an intervention to improve feedback giving was implemented, its impact proved difficult to assess.

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1. Use more of the relevant literature.
2. Use more references.
3. Proof read.
4. Improve organization and structure.
5. Improve/correct punctuation.
6. Check and improve spelling and grammar.
7. Avoid over-clever language.
8. Give more detail.
9. Use more specific/practical examples.
10. Support your points by reference or logical argument.
11. Use academic style.
12. Focus on the question and cover all key points.
13. Deepen analysis of key issues.
14. Sharpen critique.
15. Identify and develop implications.
16. Link theory and practice.

Table one: Issues synthesised from examination of over 150 tutor feedback sheets in a small-scale study. (Duncan 2007)

In a series of focus groups (n=50) Wiley (2012) explored students' favoured mode of receiving feedback. Of five options, students favoured dialogic (conversational) feedback over other measures (50%), whilst written report (33%) and screen-cast (17%) also featured as favourites. The other options of podcast and telephone feedback garnered no support. The National Union of Students Feedback Charter (NUS 2008) guides that students should have the option of different feedback methods, however the project undertaken by Attenborough (2011) identifies that students may prefer different methods in combination rather than an either/or approach to feedback, and that podcasted feedback might have a place in a toolkit of feedback strategies.

Mode of Feedback

Attenborough et al (2012) explored the use of audio feedback recorded as individual podcasts to students and uploaded to the Strategic Learning Environment alongside written feedback. Students undertaking a stand-alone continuing professional development module in the School of Health were provided feedback on their formative work in two forms – audio podcast and written feedback. This study built upon the findings of Merry and Orsmond (2008) that students prefer audio to written feedback. It was guided by the perceived advantage that audio feedback has for dyslexic students and students whose first language is not English. Survey and interview approaches were made to students receiving audio and written feedback as well as those lecturers responsible for providing it. In all 100 questionnaires were distributed to students who had opted in to receiving audio feedback. The return of 49 of these represented a good return rate for this type of study. Of the 49 responses, 45 had submitted their work via the SLE and had received audio feedback via this medium whilst four had not.

Of the 45 students receiving audio feedback, 31 had listened to the feedback provided for them (69%) although data glitches accounted for some missed data. Further, two of this group also volunteered to be interviewed about their experiences. The findings of this study highlight that audio feedback was perceived positively by students with one of the interviewees noting that for them: "The more feedback the better really". However Attenborough et al (*ibid*) note that audio feedback was not seen by students as an alternative form of feedback. Instead 89% of survey respondents preferred both types of feedback together as a complementary system rather than an 'either/or' provision. 80% of respondents expressed a preference for audio and written feedback together for any further assignments, in comparison to a smaller group of 16% who preferred written only feedback on assignments.

Dialogic feedback has long been cited as good practice although building individual relationships between lecturer and a large cohort of students is recognised as difficult (Higgins, Hartley et al. 2001, Sutton 2009, Kluger and Van Dijk 2010). Brown (2012) builds upon this concept in describing the implementation of a high tech/high touch approach to module development and assessment (Naisbitt 1999). In this approach the use of technology for assessment (virtual learning environment - Moodle) is balanced with proactive support triggered by student activity reports generated by the virtual learning environment, and requests for support from students. A High tech/high touch approach is also demonstrated by Attenborough et al (2011), whose students found audio feedback more personal and relationship building. Students perceived audio feedback as an increased tutor presence in their learning, with tutors perceived as more caring. The lecturers taking part in

the focus group also identified relationships as the ideal building block for giving feedback. One lecturer commented that they felt more obligated to be positive in recording audio feedback, whilst for others the contrasts between personal 'deficit' models of marking were raised.

The team posited that the positive nature of audio feedback may be why the students liked this method. However, the lecturer focus group did identify that providing written and audio feedback was burdensome and necessitated duplication of efforts. Justification for the effort required in providing formative feedback (of any type) against the benefits to students was questioned by this group. As summative module outcomes were not evaluated in the light of this study, it remains inconclusive as to whether this form of feedback had any influence on student academic performance. However, this may provide further scope for research and analysis. This is a useful study in understanding student preferences in receiving feedback. However generalisations to a wider student population may be limited. The students surveyed are part-time, seconded from clinical practice, and Attenborough et al (2012) identify that they may have other motivations, as undertaking this module is seen as near compulsory for their practice.

Experiences of Failure

The effects of assessment can be far-reaching and are seldom neutral (Falchikov and Boud 2007). A study I undertook in 2010 explored why students on a clinically focused mentorship module within the School of Health Sciences failed or underachieved in that module (MacLaren 2010). The module is the same one later utilised as a sample by Attenborough et al (2012) albeit with a different student group. The impetus for this study was a review of module assessment results over a three year period, which indicated that the pass rate for students re-taking their assignment was poor, despite provision of significant tutor feedback on formative and summative assignments and ready availability of tutorial support. This small-scale case study was undertaken as part of doctoral study funded by the university. Whilst it is not an LDC funded study, its discussion of student outcomes of assessment and my current Learning Development Associate role merits its inclusion here.

An instrumental case study approach (Stake 1995) was used to explore the experiences of six students who had either failed the module at first or final attempt, or achieved borderline pass marks. This revealed a rich seam of experiences of assessment both in practice-based learning and academic assessment. In-depth and semi-structured interviews with the six participants formed the core of the study. Students self-selected to take part in the study after an email invitation. The low take-up of participants possibly reflected the stigma of failure as well as the busy lives of the post-registration nurses taking part in mentorship studies. Further data was collected through participant observation as module leader within the classroom and documentary review of course documents. This created a study which, while small-scale, was of sufficient depth to provide 'situated generalisation' (Simons, Kushner et al. 2003) and insights for academic practice in this area.

Issues with the format of the final assessment were noted. One key issue arising from the review of course documents was the lack of structure to the supervisor's report on mentorship achievements (needed to gain a professional award in mentorship). This did not allow supervising mentors to capture sufficient evidence of the mentorship student's competency in practice in relation to regulatory standards of mentorship in the nursing and midwifery professions. (NMC 2008) Lack of guidance on what the supervisor's role should be meant that high expectations within the role could not be communicated (c.f. Chickering and Gamson 1991) leading to potentially invalid and inaccurate assessment and reports of practice. The study contributed to alterations in the assessment strategy from a 3000 word assignment to a short answer paper (1600 words), and the implementation of a professional body-approved portfolio of mentorship practice. It gave a renewed focus on assessment in both classroom and workplace for this module which have led to improvements in pass marks at first and second attempt. However, an important factor arising from the interviews was that psychological factors were often at the root of underachievement in the module, and were not always acknowledged or addressed by lecturers. Students who failed or underachieved in their mentorship module displayed different orientations to learning which affected their onward learning. These orientations appeared to be indicative of how both mentorship and underachievement was framed for the individual.

Two representative cases were discussed whose responses showed similarity to the entity-theorist and incremental –theorist orientations to learning identified by Dweck and associates (Dweck and Sorich 1999, Dweck 2000, Nussbaum and Dweck 2008). Students with incremental-theorist orientations appeared to thrive in the face of learning challenges. The concepts of commitment, perceived personal control and challenge are significant components in promoting positive outcomes and coping with stressful situations such as their negative assignment outcomes (Maddi 2004). Incremental-theorists demonstrate high self-efficacy and problem solving approaches to new challenges in learning (Nussbaum and Dweck 2008). Meanwhile, entity-theorist orientations to learning, regard learning potential as fixed and unresponsive to effort, with the locus of control situated outside the individual, making them to susceptible to learned helplessness (Seligman 1975), as they doubt their intelligence, ability and personal capacity to reach learning outcomes.

Four of the six interviewees identified that they had had no choice but to attend the module, having 'been sent' by their employers, further reflecting helplessness in accessing learning and reinforcing the assertion of Abbott et al (2012) that post-registration health care students may not share motivations with a wider student population; being mature learners already established within a professional career. However, 'learning blocks' (Evison 2006) deriving from previous episodes of learning was significant to this group, affecting the acceptance and use of feedback; especially in the student with an entity-theorist orientation. All students recounted stories demonstrating an 'aggressive collegiality' amongst work colleagues both toward students and to themselves as registered practitioners and learners. Falchikov (2007) notes that emotional responses to feedback can invalidate otherwise sound assessment processes although participants appeared to be discussing extreme cases of the emotional labour involved in managing the assessment process as both a student and colleague in clinical practice. However, the motivation of participants was not clear, as students may have had 'an axe to grind' with assessment processes.

This lack of reciprocity and cooperation only served to undermine confidence in practitioners' learning capabilities, especially in workplace components of the module assessment, and had the potential to further jeopardise workplace assessment of competency. Workplace learning and assessment are vital parts of the assessment schemes for many programmes at City University London, and as educators we have an obligation to ensure that practice-based colleagues are adequately prepared and supported to enable and promote valid and reliable assessment. Similarly approaches to assessment and feedback must build upon the previous experiences of students in order to provide tailored feedback approaches and encourage students to gain confidence and competence in practice and academic study. Although I made no explicit recommendations for how this might be achieved due to the small sample group interviewed, the assessment protocol for the module was subsequently reviewed, to consider assessment for learning as well as assessing for outcomes.

Feedback as Part of a Holistic Approach to Learning
Brown (2012) considers the overall concept of assessment for learning in her Learning Development Project report, based in the Cass Business School. She gives an account of success of an approach to assessment and feedback consisting of wholesale changes to module design along constructivist lines to encourage student engagement with module content and facilitate deep learning. This focus on engagement for assessment is unique in the context of projects sponsored by the LDC. Previous innovations within the Business Studies degree pathway had included the implementation of Moodle and the introduction of invigilated and online tests, although a traditional lecturer mode of delivery persisted. However, the development of the double credit bearing module Management Practice and Skills (MPS) implemented further student centred activity in the form of six interlinked pieces of coursework (some individual, some team-based) within a curriculum incorporating shorter lectures and smaller group seminar tutorials. Using a high tech/high touch approach, students and tutors got to know and feed back to each other in person whilst the learning analytics functions of Moodle served to both track student engagement and allow 'action support' and intervention in students' learning.

Brown (2012) recognises that whilst the aim of her project was to review and assess the role of student coursework and feedback on assessments, this became only a part of a "tightly interwoven course design". What was demonstrated was that the new module fulfilled the four principles outlined by Gibbs (2010) as essential for high quality education (class size, student effort and engagement, choice of teachers, quality and quantity of feedback to students). The module was generally well received by those students enrolled on it, although some teething problems in articulating how lectures, seminars and coursework activities were linked, were noted by students.

Key Themes
The individual studies discussed in this paper reiterate that assessment and feedback are multi-dimensional issues affecting students and academic staff in most, if not all, schools within the University. That some programmes suffer from poor survey scores in this area in local and national student surveys suggests that this remains an area of academic practice in which universities must continually develop. Taken together they offer a snapshot of assessment at City University London which appears to echo the recommendations of Nicol (2010) to make written feedback more dialogic. Whilst Nicol's recommendations related to the use of written feedback, the feedback elements appear to chime with the content and

findings of recent LDC sponsored work when applied in their broadest sense. Table 2 demonstrates how his suggestions are broadly represented across the studies reviewed.

Feedback Element: Feedback should be...	MacLaren (2010)	Attenborough et al (2011)	Abbott et al (2012)	Brown (2012)	Wiley (2012)	Reimers and Freeman (2012)
Understandable	√	√	√		√	
Selective		√				
Specific	√		√	√	√	
Timely	√		√		√	√
Contextualised	√	√	√	√		√
Non-judgemental	X		√	√		
Balanced		√			√	
Forward-looking				√	√	
Transferable	√			√		
Personal	√	√				

Table 2: Coverage of Nicol's suggestions for improved dialogic feedback across the six studies reviewed. Negative associations are shown as an X. The table shows that over the past few years all elements of these suggestions have been addressed. Adapted from Nicol D (2010)

Marking and the provision of written feedback are not the only mechanisms affecting assessment outcome. Instead what arises from the studies presented is a need for clarity (Wiley, 2012): of process, of communication, of expectations, of marking processes, of assessment criteria and of feedback itself. Developing ways to become more explicit in student feedback should be a consideration for all teaching staff. Interventions such as peer review of feedback (currently in use in my own school), offer opportunities for tutors to discuss the 'hard skills' of analysis and synthesis identified by Duncan (2007), although do not appear widespread across the university. Further, consideration of the mode of feedback may also yield advances in student learning. The NUS charter on assessment and feedback identifies that students should have access to feedback in different formats (NUS 2008), however the studies presented here indicate that whilst useful, participation rates in trials of innovative forms of feedback are low amongst the student body.

Course design to allow assessment for learning is vital in instilling a sense of 'learning to learn' or feeding forward, rather than serving as an endpoint to the learning experience. This intervention needs to come early in a student's learning trajectory to encourage problem-solving approaches to learning and help to overcome learning blocks experienced in previous experiences of study. Preparation of assessors is also highlighted, identifying that all should be prepared adequately and discussions of what is hard to assess and feedback, should be the norm to allow for team development and fostering more collaborative and collegial relationships to support learning and assessment. Orientations to learning can affect assessment outcomes - poor experiences can affect student's ability to perform in assessment and accept feedback. Meanwhile student engagement with the development of assessment regimes may be one avenue to explore in developing assessments that give all stakeholders some ownership of the assessment process (Attenborough et al 2012).

Further data on student's experience of assessment and feedback is required to explore attitudes toward feedback and assessment of a wider group of students across the university. Reimers and Freeman (2011) identified that perceptions do not always meet with the realities of feedback timing. This might be achieved through the implementation of validated questionnaire surveys such as the Assessment Experience Questionnaire (Gibbs and Simpson 2004) at an early stage of students' university feedback career. The scaling up and prioritisation of practitioner research across the organisation needs to be given consideration by the Central University, along with regular synthesis of assessment and feedback projects so that lacunae might be identified and addressed, and good practice disseminated. Using Simons' (1996) concept of situated generalisation, projects within different schools can demonstrate significance to a wider academic population within the University and connect teams of students and researchers from different schools to offer a wider horizon to researching such complex issues in academic practice.

Conclusions

The tradition of practitioner research across City University London is one that encourages teachers and lecturers to stand back and explore their own practice in small scale projects. Whilst the intention may be individual or school-level practice improvement, this review has yielded a wealth of insights into the assessment and feedback process across different schools which highlight similarities of experience and approach. Despite the relatively small numbers of students engaged within each of the projects, taken together they demonstrate the commitment of staff to make a difference to teaching and learning within the University; each study adding a different dimension to a multi-faceted view of assessment and feedback activity.

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